

Abyssinia

I. Ethiopia's Strange Mixture of Races

By Herbert Vivian, M.A.

Author of "Abyssinia : Through the Lion Land "

ABYSSINIA takes the traveller back to Bible times. It is a long, tedious journey into the interior, even now that a sort of railway runs you up to Addis Abbaba. This is the capital, which consists of an enormous encampment of mud huts, gathered round a Palace and Court of Justice, which are also made of mud on a larger scale. About one-third of the way up there is one big town, Harrar, with ancient stone and mud buildings due to an old Egyptian occupation. Otherwise you scarcely pass a single village. You meet pastoral people, in long flowing robes, driving their flocks and herds very much as Moses must have done.

You are expected to give and receive presents, according to the rank of giver and receiver, as was the custom three thousand and more years ago. Tribesmen welcome you with much ceremony and present you with an ox or a sheep, and you would cause great offence if you did not buy the gift at an exorbitant price.

They might be content with a bottle of whisky or champagne, though they usually prefer a large payment in cash. Cash is a constant source of trouble. The currency consists chiefly of Maria

Theresa dollars, minted in Austria until the outbreak of the war, about the size of a five-shilling bit, but worth only their weight in debased silver.

For smaller currency, cartridges and bars of salt are commonly used. The salt bars are about four inches long and half an inch thick, and the custom of the country is to take them about on donkeys. You run the risk of seeing all your ready money melt away in a sudden rainstorm.

It is a great art to avoid receiving presents in the interior. An ox is offered with every sort of compliment, and, apart from having to pay through the nose for it, you know it will probably

make most of the members of your caravan as drunk as though you had given them a hogs-head of brandy. In Abyssinia meat as well as drink can have an intoxicating effect upon empty stomachs. The Emperor Menelek was a great stickler for presents, and his first question, after I had ridden about three miles to his palace through torrents and waterfalls in a dress-suit at cock-crow, was: "What have you brought me?" When I produced an automatic pistol, he merely handed it over to his armourer with a grunt.

There are all sorts of passport



SLAVE WOMAN OF THE BORDER

Women such as this are what the Galla slave-hunters bring back when they raid British territory—something sturdy and negroid for heavy farm work

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LIJ YASU, THE RENEGADE EMPEROR

This young ruler of Ethiopia, besides siding with Turk and Teuton in the Great War, used the savage Moslems of the Wollo Gallas to abolish Christianity and introduce Mahomedanism. A great rising overwhelmed him in 1916, and he was deposed

regulations as vexatious as though Abyssinia were a civilized country. Coming to a fresh district, you are liable to be stopped by shots fired in the air, from a kind of bird's nest encampment on the top of the nearest hill. You are then expected to spend a couple of hours in climbing up to report yourself, endure rigorous examination, pay fees, have all sorts of rubber endorsements added to grimy pieces of paper, and explain what on earth you intend by coming to the outlandish country. And as imperial or royal writs do not run outside separate provinces, you never can tell when you will be detained or turned back.

The word Abyssinia is resented by the natives, who call themselves Ethiopians.

Abyssinian means "mongrel," and there is hardly on earth a more mixed population. The types range from the blackest, negro-looking faces, like that of the late Emperor Menelek, to the regular features of the Arab kind, scarcely duskier than those of Eurasians, and to handsome, light-skinned representatives of certain branches of the Mediterranean race.

An amusing point is that Abyssinians, however black and uncomely, cherish the idea that they are the white people. They allude to Europeans as "Red Faces," in the same spirit as the Boers used to call the British "Red Necks." The chief diet is raw meat. When an emperor or empress gives a banquet in the mud and timber palace, all the warriors sit on the ground in the courtyard, while slaves carry round the carcasses of bleeding beasts. Each

guest in turn draws his sword, makes a ceremonial bow to the Court, bites into the flesh, and cuts off a piece in dangerous proximity to his nose. The amount of raw meat consumed on a high occasion is almost incredible. Its general use as a diet produces serious diseases.

The drink is more attractive, a fermented honey which tastes like very weak white wine, but goes to the head very rapidly. There is likewise beer. Cannibalism is supposed to be extinct, but strange stories are told of its survival in remote villages, over which the Government exercises no real control.

One swarthy race on the borders of Somaliland has an evil notoriety for killing males without provocation. Each death entitles the killer to another

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brass band round his spear. This is not necessarily a proof of prowess; the number of the victims is more important than the method of slaughter. A little Indian trader, making his way back to the coast after years of commerce, is far more likely to be stabbed in the back than an elephant hunter with a rifle under his arm. Tales are told of expectant mothers being stabbed on the chance of their offspring being male. Otherwise the slaughter of the fair sex confers no claim to another brass band.

On the other hand, if a tribesman kills a lion or elephant it almost amounts to a patent of nobility. The average lion of Abyssinia is a timid creature that slinks away from the passage of a caravan, having none of the temptations of hunger. The elephants, however, have a remarkable degree of intelligence, and observe whether a man is carrying a gun or not.

The scenery is varied rather than exciting, ranging from great wastes of sand—in which many travellers have lost their lives—to undulating, fertile park-lands, strangely reminiscent of England, and highlands going up to nine thousand feet. Here the temperature is so variable that a fall of forty degrees Fahrenheit very shortly after sunset is by no means unusual.

Roads all over the empire are little more than caravan tracks; there are scarcely any bridges, and the traveller has to ride or wade through rivers which are usually inhabited by crocodiles, hippopotami, and leeches.

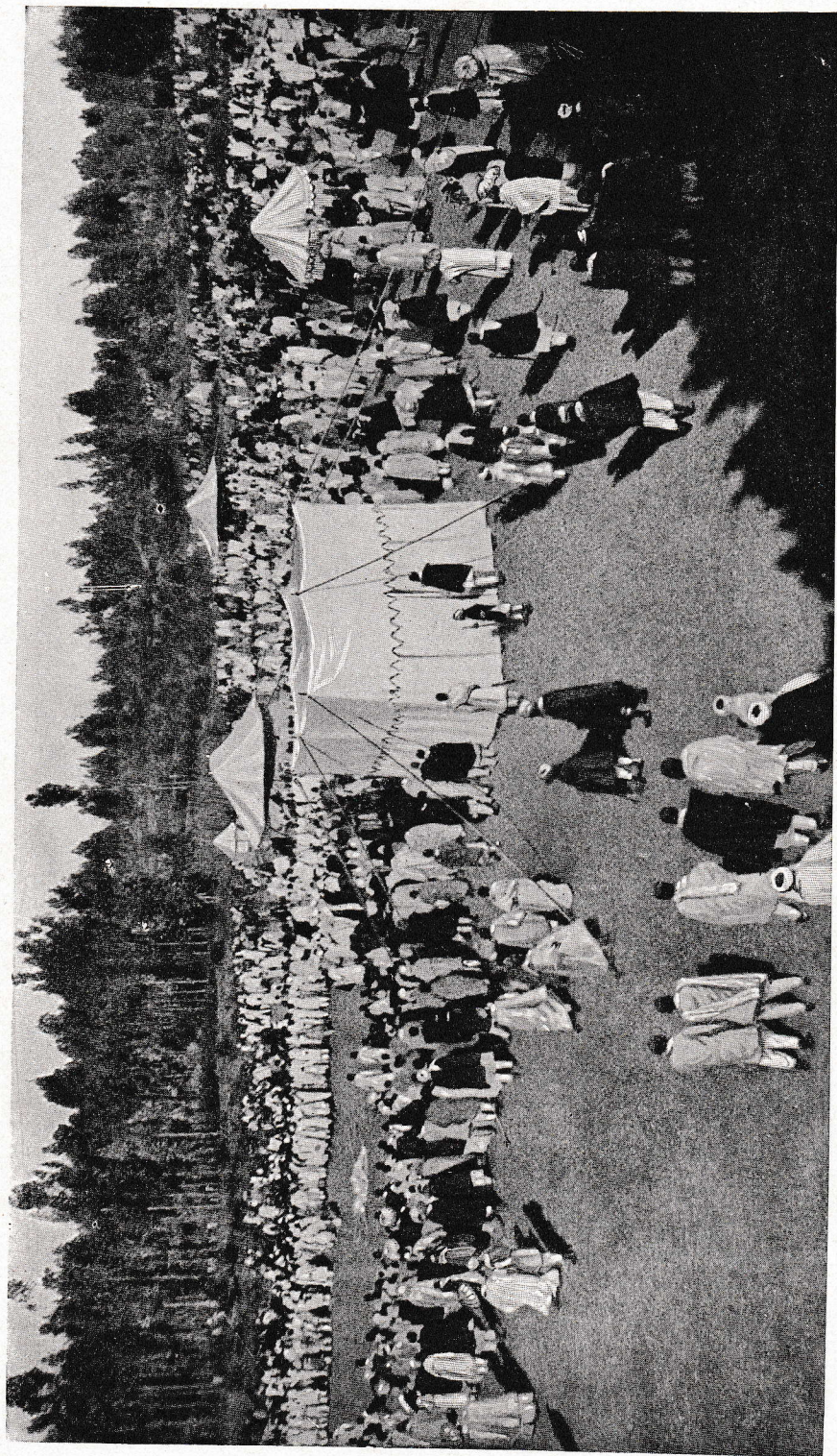


FIGHTING EMPRESS IN ROBES OF STATE

Zauditu, Menelek's daughter, saw her young crowned nephew using Moslem Gallas to uproot the old faith. She stood for her queer notions of Christianity, and, after the victory of the Christian forces in 1916, reigned as empress

Some of the rivers play strange pranks. One that I crossed had the appearance of a dry, stony bed some hundred yards wide. My caravan had gone over when I reached the bank, and my men told me to hurry if I did not want to be drowned or cut off for several days without food or tents. I went on and laughed at this fairy tale, until I heard something like the distant roar of a train. "Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!" cried all the men in a panic.

I succeeded in reaching the other side just before a mighty river came tearing down, sweeping before it huge trees and the carcasses of sheep and



GREAT GATHERING AT THE BENEDICTION OF WATERS BY THE PATRIARCH OF THE SOUTHERN CHURCH
 At the Feast of the Epiphany there is a large concourse of people at Addis Abbaba, capital of Abyssinia, to see the Patriarch of the Shoa Church bless the waters. The rite is the same as that of the Greek Church, but the Southern Abyssinians, who are deeply tinged with negro blood, regard their priests in the light of holy witch doctors, and to them the annual ceremony of the benediction of waters is a display of miraculous power

Photo Mail A W. Bentin.



TOM-TOM AND STICK DANCING RITE OF THE PRIESTS OF A SO-CALLED CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Ethiopian ritual is largely an affair of dancing. Each performing priest darts a long walking-stick into the ground, while he moves, with hieratic actions, to the music of tom-toms and barbaric mouth instruments and a chorus of hand-clapping acolytes. Holding themselves to be descendants of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, the Abyssinian clergy maintain round their sanctuaries the tradition of King David dancing before the Ark

Photo, Major A. W. D. Bentinck

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MANE-CROWNED LION KILLER

Minstrels and singing villagers have celebrated his prowess while he danced the lion dance, and the hair fringe represents his victim's mane

oxen. This is said to be a frequent occurrence in spring-time, and many unsuspecting travellers have been caught in these dry river beds.

The lack of water is a great hindrance to agriculture. The maps are studded with beautiful names of "wells," but, as often as not, the traveller finds only a little brackish water which has been fouled by camels and mules. Even then there is

difficulty in finding it by scraping up the sand for one or two feet. In the highlands, of course, are plenty of streams, which might be used for waterpower if Abyssinia ever became civilized. On these plateaux the soil is so fertile that crops grow almost without cultivation. Coffee, indeed, grows



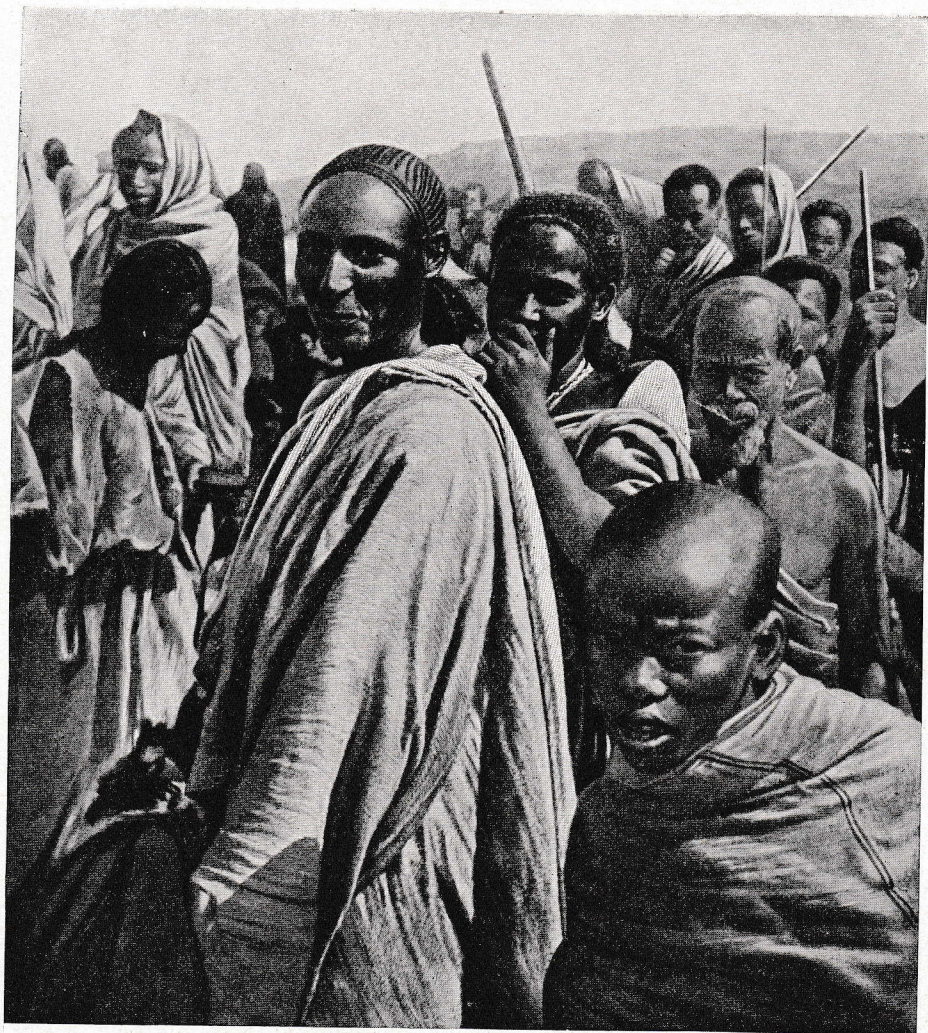
LION-SPEARER AND MAN-HUNTER

This Issa tribesman, on the Somali track to Abyssinia, is fonder of men than of his lion cubs. Lions he kills; cubs he keeps for profit; but men he hunts for sport, tallying his kills by brass rings on his spear-shaft



PROUD MASCULINE MOTHER OF FIGHTING MEN

Poised in her doorway in festival attire, this masterful woman of the once forbidden Somali city of Harrar is a blend of warlike invaders. Somalis and Gallas, Beduins, with Egyptians and Abyssinians, fought and mingled. An old slander runs that at times, when meat is unobtainable, the Harrar woman will eat children



CROWD OF OILY HEADS ON WHICH SCENT AND RANCIDITY BATTLE

Abyssinians seldom wash. To save head troubles, women plait their hair in ridges and mat it with thick oil about once every four months. Men merely oil their hair. Both put on pats of butter and let them soak down. Oily scents are used to combat the smell. This is a cold weather photograph: in summer-time haloes of flies would adorn all heads but the bald

wild in the south and west regions, and is sent from there to the Sudan, while the long-berry moka that is exported to Aden may eventually become the source of great wealth.

Cattle and corn are plentiful. Horses are weedy and neglected. When they fall ill they are left to die by the roadside at the mercy of the flies. Their skeletons, and those of camels, mules, and asses, are a regular feature on a caravan route.

To know what flies are, it is necessary to go to Abyssinia. Every

meal is one long, relentless fight against their onslaughts. When you pass a village or a group of peasants you behold them surrounded by dense black clouds. It is a popular fashion to smear the hair with a profusion of rancid butter, and each Abyssinian usually goes about with a big black halo of buzzing insects. The children have colonies of flies incessantly in their eyes, and ocular troubles are hideously prevalent at all ages.

Some marriage customs are very primitive, consisting of little more

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than the purchase of the bride, with as many sheep or oxen as her charms and position are reckoned to warrant. The husband comes to church carrying a whip with a steel handle and leather lash as the symbol of his authority. Unchastity before marriage is rare, but infidelity afterwards is general, and attracts very little attention. Hard work in a wife is what her husband chiefly prizes. She carries all the burthens and toils in the fields.

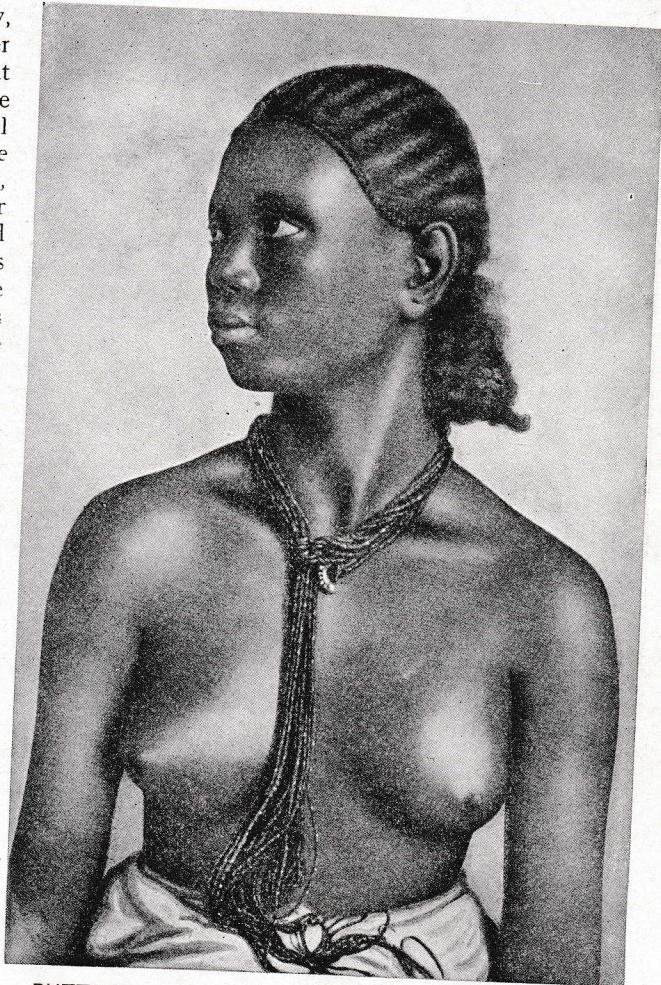
The traveller often sees wife and donkey harnessed to the same plough, while the master struts along cracking his whip. If he is dissatisfied with her energy, he can always send her back to her family. But he must make ample compensation. Until recently slaves were exported to Arabia, Turkey, and other Moslem countries, and although slavery was nominally abolished, the market value of slaves was, some years before the war, still very high in Abyssinia.

The old Emperor, calling himself "King of the Kings of Ethiopia," and claiming descent from Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, never exercised much direct authority outside his own province of Shoa. Now the lesser kings of the feudal empire do pretty much what they like, making war on one another, riding to battle on horseback with leopard skins over their shoulders, and exacting tribute from all strangers.

Perhaps it is because the imperial power tends to grow weak at times in this empire of great

fighting feudatories, that the symbols of power, such as thrones and umbrellas, are marvellously prized.

When King John IV. was crowned at Axum, the ancient city, he had a throne that looked almost as gorgeous as that of King Solomon. It was the work of an Italian carpenter, who received as reward the position of prime minister, but ended his career almost as humbly as he began it, as interpreter in the Italian colony. At the new capital, Addis Abbaba, the French Minister enormously increased his influence by receiving everybody,



BUTTERED BEAUTY OF THE NEGROID NORTH

This girl of Tigré has thickly oiled and buttered her hair and arranged it in wave-like plaits pinned to the front braid. At night she sleeps with her neck on a wooden rest

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including his European colleagues, on a wonderful high throne draped in bright scarlet silk, with an embroidery of golden suns and signs of the zodiac.

The first chief of the Church, the Abuna, lives in splendid state, sitting on a high throne with a background of golden stars gleaming round a crucifix.



THE ABUNA AND HIS STRANGE BLESSING

The Abuna is Patriarch of Addis Abbaba and Archbishop of the Christian Church of Ethiopia which was isolated among Mahomedanism for a thousand years. So holy is the Abuna's saliva that he blesses his people best by spitting at them

In his left hand are beads of priceless jewels, under his feet the most glorious carpets procurable from Persia.

The churches of Southern Abyssinia, like all the other buildings, are circular, and composed of mud and sticks. The principal part of the service takes place in a sort of holy of holies, or sanctuary, in the middle of the building,

and the people consider they have done their duty if they squat in the outer circle or lounge about the churchyard. The ritual seems to consist largely of dancing. Each priest holds in his hand a long stick, like a punt-pole, and darts it into the ground as though he were trying to stab snakes. The

ceremonial music is made by tom-toms and a barbaric sort of mouth-organ.

The people are very proud of being Christians. They were converted in the middle of the fourth century by a disciple of Athanasius, the author of the famous creed, but they fell away from orthodoxy, and became heretics of the monophysite sect. In this they only followed the Copts of Egypt, and even now all the heads of their Church are selected from Coptic monks in a monastery in the Egyptian desert. Again and again the Abyssinians have tried to free themselves from the Coptic Mother Church, but they have not been successful. The patriarch of Alexandria will only consecrate at most seven Coptic bishops for them, and as ten bishops are the canonical number for the election of a primate, the Abyssinians cannot elect an independent primate of their own.

Perhaps it was just as well in the past that the Copts retained control of all the high offices. Being for many centuries ringed about by Moslem powers and forgotten for ages by the rest of Christendom, the Ethiopian mountaineers, while most valiantly defending their creed against Jews as well as Moslems, sank deep into the



ACCUSED AND ACCUSER IN CHAINS

Addis Abbaba is a collection of wood and plaster huts, and prison accommodation is limited accordingly. At one time the only prison in Abyssinia was at Harrar, two hundred miles from the capital. So there arose the custom of chaining a prisoner to his warder and an accused to his accuser. Justice in Abyssinia is a summary affair, dispensed in the open market place, although there is right of appeal to the emperor

Photo, Major A. W. D. Bentinck



COURTSHIP DANCE OF GIRLS AND MEN OF THE WESTERN GALLAS

Civilized Western Gallas change into a wooing dance the fierce love-rite of the savage Eastern Gallas. Leaping and panting, the men stretch their hands to seize the girls, who invite and reject them. In the wild dance of the savage Gallas the men work themselves up into real passion



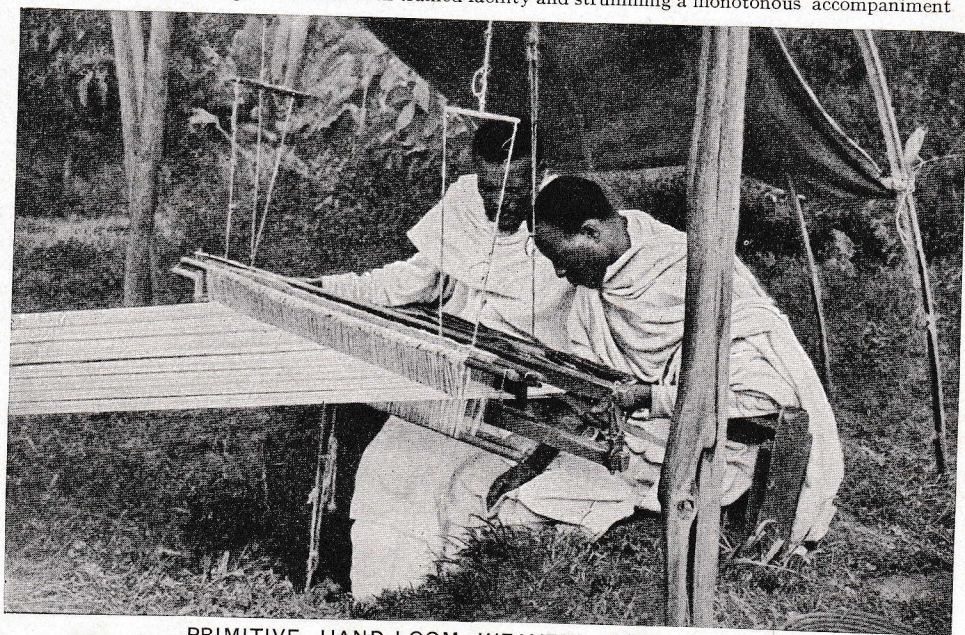
OPEN-AIR INSTRUCTION IN THE OLD AND NEWLY VICTORIOUS FAITH

A priest of Addis Abbaba is teaching a group of children to read the Bible. This is the height of education in the backward land with little literature, and only the well-to-do can afford their children time for learning. Yet it was such teachers as these that saved Abyssinia from turning Moslem during the war, when the young emperor fell under Moslem sway and abandoned the Coptic Church



MINSTREL BARDS OF ABYSSINIA WITH HARP AND LYRE

Song in Abyssinia is in a primitive, heroic stage, and so are the stringed instruments. Like Homer, the bards chant of ancient heroes, but they are journalists as well as historians, and sing of the topics of the day, improvising their verses with trained facility and strumming a monotonous accompaniment



PRIMITIVE HAND-LOOM WEAVERS OF ABYSSINIA

The nobility may prefer Manchester shirtings or Yorkshire woollens, but the Abyssinian farmer can compete with all factories. His cotton is grown, cleaned and spun on the farm, and woven with a primitive loom. The soft, well-made, warm fabric is fashioned into the long white shamma, or national robe, with which the weavers in the photograph are clothed

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nightmare of negro superstitions that beat against their borders. Even the fact that about one-fifth of their adult male population are deacons or priests has not saved them from falling back into a kind of primitive paganism. Some of their witch-doctory practices are remarkable. The detection of

wonder is, not that it has become debased, but that it has survived. One part of the race went over to Jewry and for some time conquered the rest and enforced Hebraic observances.

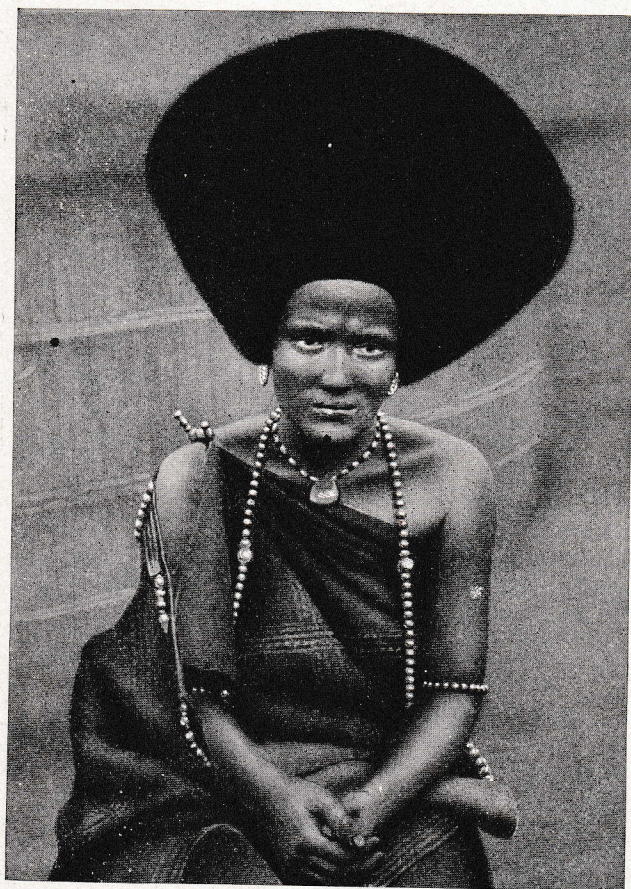
So the Jewish Sabbath is observed as well as the Christian Sunday. Circumcision is practised, and so are the kosher

form of slaughter of animals and the avoidance of unclean food. As the people also observe about one hundred and fifty feast-days in the year, their life is not a particularly hard-working one. All the priests are married, but there are many monks and nuns holding themselves aloof in monasteries and convents, and rich are many of the ecclesiastical lands that are farmed by serfs.

Missionaries, by the way, are an abomination of abominations to the mountaineers. The custom is to expel them all, when opportunity arises. "Europeans," said one of the last emperors, "first send us missionaries, then consuls, and then soldiers." Doctors are the only strangers who are really welcome. As every foreign traveller is supposed to be wise in medicine, his best way to make easy progress is to take a good store of blue pills, quinine, and opium pellets, and deal

them out as well as he can to the crowding patients.

The real trouble with Abyssinia is that it is an unconsolidated collection of warlike races. The main element of the population are the Northern Africans, akin to the Berbers, to early Egyptians, and to many Europeans of the Mediterranean race. Where fairly pure, they have a light or lightish

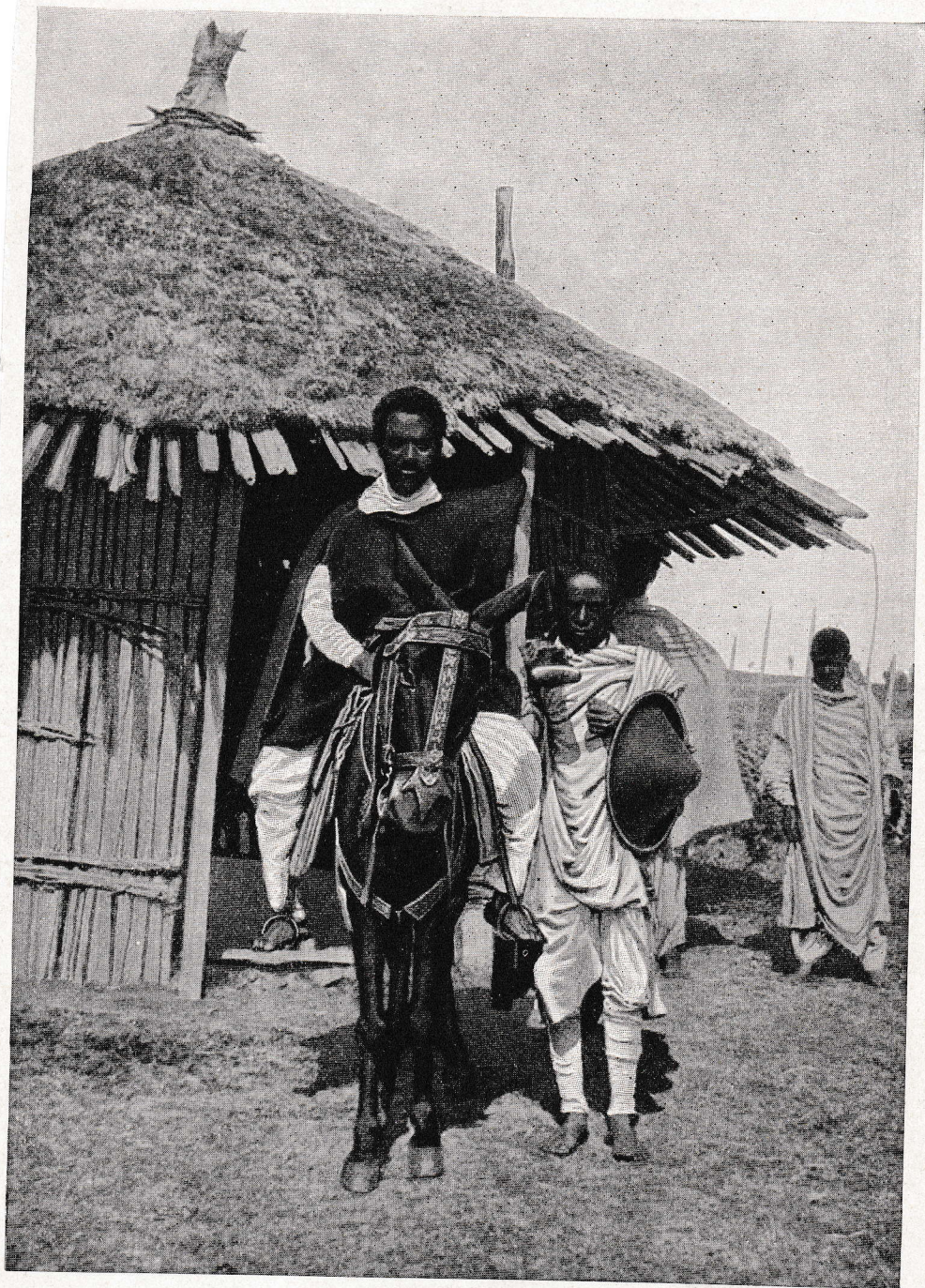


FUZZY WUZZI WOMAN OF THE WEST

Her way of gumming her hair over a great light framework connects her with the Beja Nile race and the Baggara Fuzzy Wuzzies who were broken at Omdurman

village crime, for instance, is conducted by the priest. If he cannot find the criminal by prayers and curses, he takes a small boy and drugs him until the lad dreams of someone. If he does not dream of the person the priest has decided must be the criminal, more drugs are given.

A poor, battered, damaged thing is Abyssinian Christianity. But the



ON THE LOWEST RUNG OF THE LADDER TO GREATNESS

The insignificance of this dusky personage, who has called on a peasant in his hut, is betrayed by his having only one man to carry his rifle and buckler. Even Europeans are insulted by natives, if they ride with only two armed attendants, in a land where social prestige is measured by the display of armed power. More men will be given to this official if he pleases the Regent, Ras Tafari, who seldom appears in public with fewer than a hundred retainers

Photo Major A. W. D. Bentinck

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complexion, almost pleasant features, and speak their original language known as Cushite. They are, however, now overruled by a stronger branch of their stock, which has intermarried with invading Semites, and uses a Semitised language, Amharic.

The Amharic speakers are the true Abyssinians, or mongrels, that give the country its foreign name, and provide the sharp-shooting militia-men, on whose irregular ways of mountain warfare the freedom of the nation has for thousands of years depended.

Their womenfolk are, on the whole, remarkably pretty, and, according to Italian and other settlers, as well as Moslem connoisseurs, make the best of housewives. Only one-fourth of the men of this stock, however, are united for life to their wives by a sacred marriage. The rest only enter into more or less temporary civil unions, in which the bride is obtained by barter.

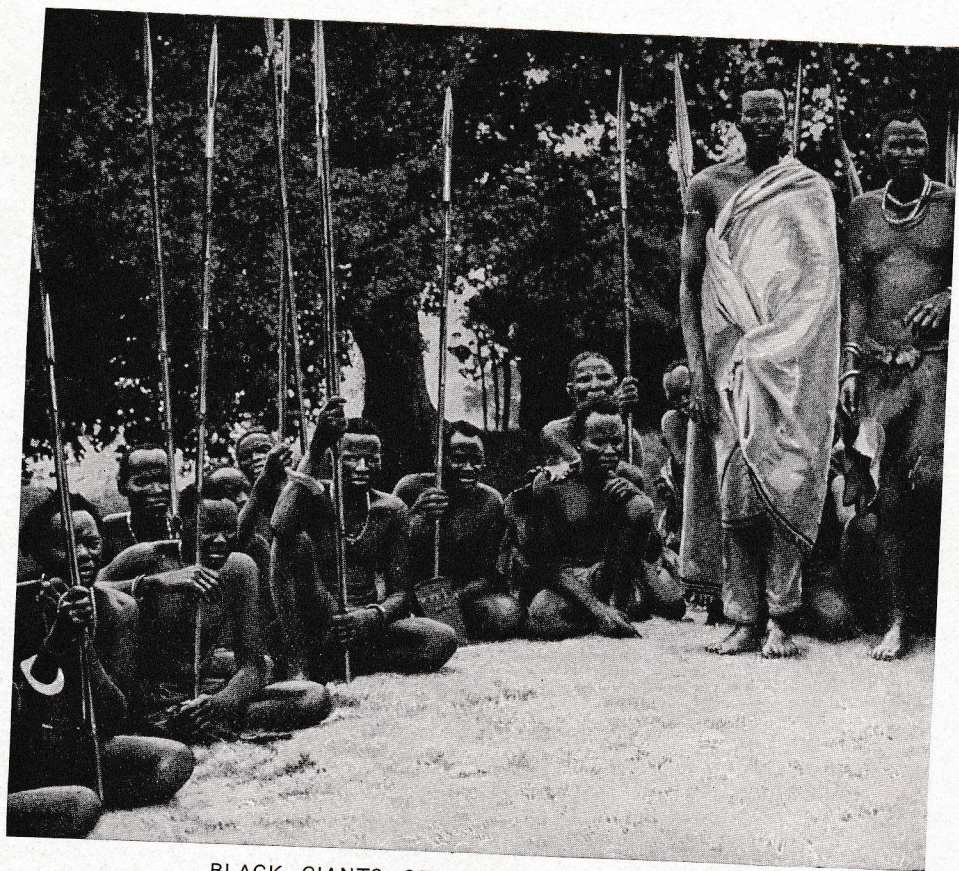
Beneath the Amharic level are the Gallas. They are a well-built race, with high foreheads and fine faces, who invaded the country from the Gulf of Aden and still constitute the grand national danger. After whipping the Abyssinian up into his present warlike mood, the Gallas are now more or less serfs of the aristocratic native mountaineer, who, on their account, is ready for war at any time, and lives under a military dictatorship. Such fine fighters are the Gallas that, if they could get modern firearms, they might have the Abyssinians again as their serfs. Attempts have been made to convert them to Christianity, and Moslem missionaries have also endeavoured to bring them into Islam. At heart, however, they remain fine fighting pagans, and serve to keep the Abyssinian standing armies and militias fit for battle.

The aristocratic stock-breeding highland race also has within its borders



SLAVE WOMEN POUNDING OUT OIL FOR FAST DAY

The Abyssinian farmer uses pounds of butter every day, but on fast days he must make shift with vegetable oils. Before break of day, his Galla women begin to pound oil-seeds in tall, hard-wood mortars, with hard-wood rammers over three feet long. It is hard, prolonged work, for little oil is obtained in one hour, and quarts of it are wanted



BLACK GIANTS OF ABYSSINIAN NILELAND

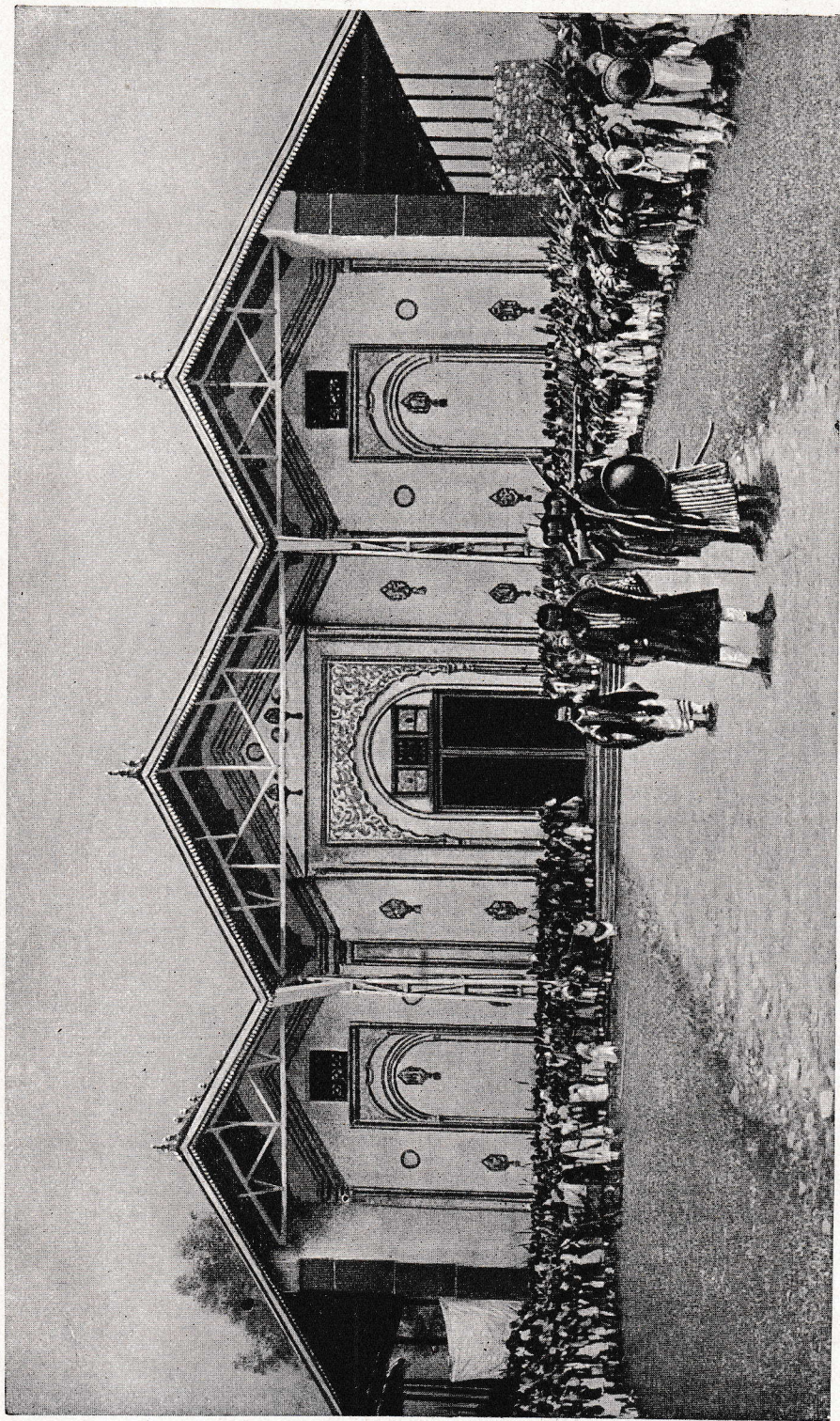
These huge negroes of Nilotic speech live along the Sobat tributaries that run into the Nile below Fashoda. Known as Jambos, they are savage spearmen of the old negro type, physically distinct from the Nilotic people, whose language they use. They have speared their way into Abyssinia

another permanent stimulus to military training in a wild, fanatic Bedouin stock, the Danakils, who are remarkably handsome nomads of the north-eastern corner of the empire. With them may be ranked the Somali borderlanders of the eastern frontier, who came from the Yemen and conquered a remarkable stretch of poor territory. Westward, various blends of negroes form a very primitive fringe to Abyssinia and, as slaves, were until lately the foundation of the national slave trade. From their girls came the touch of the tar-brush seen in the late Emperor Menelek and other Southern Abyssinians.

Last, least, and most curious are the Falashas, who are remnants of the northern Cushite tribe which accepted the Jewish religion and for a generation or two ruled the country. They live

apart from Christian and Moslem, and seem to need badly a purifying connection with the new Palestine, if half the tales told of them are true.

With her virgin soil and all her vast natural resources, it would be hard to fix the limit to the power, wealth, and influence of a reorganised Abyssinia. But can the Abyssinians, with all their internal difficulties of fighting master-races and fighting under-races, reorganise themselves? For centuries they have stood, the fortress of an ancient creed, above the jungles of African darkness, and successfully fought against pagan, Moslem, and Christian. Their present position seems to promise that they will remain masters of their own destiny, in the last independent state that now remains in Africa.



TWELVE THOUSAND WARRIORS GATHERING FOR THE RAW BEEF PALACE BANQUET.

In brigades of 4,000, the soldiers enter the hall, where the emperor is enthroned, salute him, and sit down between great bread-filled baskets. To them stewards bring huge lumps of freshly-killed beef. They mouth as much as they can, cut it off close to the lips with knife or sword. Then, with a foot-long horn of strong mead, completed by a glass of spirit, a brigade feasts for three hours. So a division of three brigades spends a day in a continuous orgy of raw meat eating

Abyssinia

II. The Story of the Ethiopian Empire

By Lord Edward Gleichen, K.C.V.O.

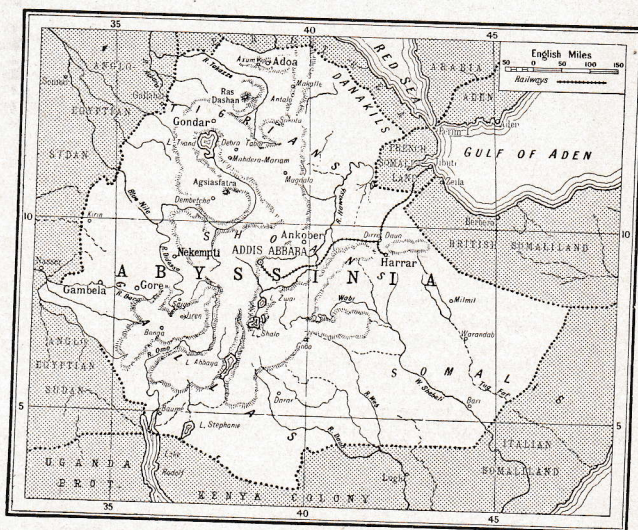
Author of "With the Mission to Menelek"

LITTLE is known about the origin of the Hamitic race which occupies the mountainous plateau now known as Abyssinia. Of old this country was included in the vague region known as Ethiopia, and the natives still speak of themselves as "Itiopiayan," much resenting the term of "Habeshi" (meaning "of mixed race")—whence the word Abyssinia) applied to them by the Arabs. A story, still firmly believed in by the people, assigns the origin of their kingly line to one Menelek, the son of King Solomon and of Balkis, Queen of Sheba; and colour is certainly given to this legend by distinctive Jewish customs and traditions which persist to this day. Be that as it may, the nation was converted to Christianity at an early date by Frumentius, a monk of Alexandria, in the fourth century, and the head of their clergy—the Abuna—has still to be consecrated by the Coptic Patriarch.

With the exception of a "Golden Age" of literature and higher culture about the thirteenth century, the history of Abyssinia may generally be said to consist of a gloomy record of internecine wars, barbaric deeds, and unstable governments, illumined here and there by the efforts of a few enlightened rulers to bring order into the chaos. The country has rarely rendered allegiance to a single monarch, but has, as a rule, been broken up into provinces generally at war with each other, and only combined at intervals into more or less cohesive masses by the personal strength of character of the ruler for the time being.

But little need be said of the Middle Ages, except that the country was visited by the Portuguese in 1490, and unsuccessfully invaded in the sixteenth century by the Mahomedans, under Gran, who was finally repulsed in 1543; but intercourse with Europeans, subsequent to the expulsion of Jesuit missionaries in 1633, was extremely rare until the visits of Bruce in 1769, and Salt in 1807.

In 1847 a British Consul was appointed. But his position was not an easy one, for, as usual, potentates in various portions of the country claimed the overlordship and the title of Negus Negusti—king of kings, or emperor—according to the success of their arms over those of their rivals. Sometimes the Negus of Tigré—the northern portion—was in the ascendant, sometimes the King of Shoa—the southern; and at other times the



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ruler of Amhara—the central portion—constrained the rest of the country to obey him. At one time there were as many as six Neguses warring with each other, and the chaos was indescribable.

The chief figure in Abyssinia in the middle of the nineteenth century was Kassa, who from very small beginnings in Amhara raised himself to the throne under the title of Emperor Theodore III. (1855). He conquered most of the country and became very friendly with the English. But his successes turned his head, and on receiving no answer to a letter he had despatched to Queen Victoria, he maltreated the English at his Court and put Consul Cameron in chains.

A British expedition of 16,000 men under Sir Robert Napier was consequently dispatched (1868) in order to bring him to his senses; and after a modicum of fighting our forces entered his fortress



PETTY ABYSSINIAN CHIEF GOES IN PRIDE UPON A MULE

A man's importance in Abyssinia depends largely on the size of his escort and the number of their arms. If he goes out alone, or with only a servant or two, he is a person of no account. He must have men whose principal occupation in life is to carry his rifles and spears

of Magdala with the loss of only two killed. Theodore blew out his own brains, and his dead body was found within the gates. It is of interest to note that the future ruler of Abyssinia, Menelek of Shoa, had been a prisoner in his hands two years previously, but had escaped and proclaimed himself King of Shoa.

The next ruler to seize the supreme power was another Kassa, of Tigré, who was crowned Negus Negusti in 1872 under the name of John IV. He was a most capable man, beat two Egyptian expeditions sent against him in 1875 and 1876, received the submission of Menelek, and did his best to consolidate the country. But his reign was full of troubles, and he was eventually killed by the Dervishes at the battle of Gallabat in 1889. Thereupon Menelek, an astute ruler who had been developing the resources of his own Kingdom of Shoa, seized the opportunity for which he had been waiting and proclaimed himself Emperor of Abyssinia.

A new factor now entered upon the scene in the shape of Italy. An Italian steamship company had, as long ago as 1870, purchased a site for a port in Asab Bay, and as years went on the territory was extended and taken over by the Italian Government, who developed the colony on the Red Sea known as Eritrea, and eventually annexed the big harbour of Massawa in the north in 1855.

To this King John had strongly objected, and severe fighting took place,

in which the Italians lost heavily at Dogali and elsewhere (1887). But meanwhile, Menelek in the south had entered into friendly relations with them, and, as soon as John was dead and he was securely seated on his throne, he concluded with Italy the treaty of Ucciali (1889).

Italy, however, continued to encroach on the north, and relations became strained between the two countries. Eventually war broke out in 1895, and Menelek issued a general patriotic proclamation which brought together a great national army of over one hundred thousand men, all burning to evict the hated foreigner. Baratieri, the Italian general, had barely twenty thousand ill-equipped men under his command, and was not at all anxious to attack, but he was pushed into it by Crispi, then Prime Minister in Rome.

The result might have been anticipated. The four Italian brigades advanced towards Adoa, but, owing to a mistake in their maps, one brigade moved too far ahead and was promptly attacked. In the mountainous country the remaining brigades coming to its assistance were overwhelmed piecemeal, and in the disaster which ensued the Italians lost over six thousand killed, besides one thousand five hundred wounded and two thousand prisoners (March 1st, 1896). There was nothing left for Italy to do but to cancel the Ucciali treaty and recognise the independence of Abyssinia.

ABYSSINIA & ITS STORY

This great victory over a European Power turned many eyes on Abyssinia, and for the next few years the Court at Addis Abbaba was a hotbed of intrigue. But the Emperor was too astute to enter into any entangling alliances. He organised his military forces more effectively and succeeded in imposing comparative peace on his dominions for several years.

His efforts in opening up his country to foreign trade were largely frustrated by the grasping nature of his own edicts; but he was responsible for the introduction and extension of telegraphs and telephones and many other European inventions, including a railway from Jibuti (in French Somaliland) to the capital.

After two years of poor health Menelek fell seriously ill in 1908, and lingered on, quite incapable of taking any share in the government, for another five years. Having no son of his own he had appointed as his heir and successor (1908) his twelve-year-old nephew, Lij Yasu (son of the powerful Ras Mikael of the Wollo Galla country, by his daughter, Waizero Shoaraga), and had appointed a Regent to act during his minority.

But this was not at all to the liking of his wife, the Empress Taitou, for she had other designs. Intrigue and counter-intrigue went on for the next eighteen months, until Taitou, who had succeeded in obtaining a good deal of power through her northern relations, was upset by a combination of the southern Rases, and forced to retire into oblivion. The whole government then became completely

disorganised, and the proclamation of Lij Yasu as Regent at the age of fifteen (1911) only served to make matters worse.

Yasu was a headstrong youth of no intelligence, and after several years of waywardness and disregard of the Church and of his own ministers, he scandalised the country by adopting (1915) the Moslem religion and officially recognising Turkish religious supremacy. Meanwhile Menelek had died in 1913; fighting among the Rases broke out in the following year, and the country was again in a state of chaos.

Lij Yasu's apostasy, however, produced a national reaction, and at the end of 1916 he was deposed by the Shoan chiefs, whilst Waizero Zauditu (Judith), born in 1875, a daughter of Menelek by a previous wife or concubine (Bafana), was declared Empress, and crowned in 1917. Ras Taffari, a cousin of Judith, was at the same time appointed Regent and eventual successor.

This accession, however, brought no immediate peace to the afflicted country. Yasu raised an army and made ineffectual attempts to regain his crown, and heavy fighting again broke out in the north. Eventually, after sustaining a serious defeat in 1917, Lij Yasu was hunted off to the Danakil country, and lay quiet there and in Tigré until the summer of 1921, when he returned and was made a prisoner. Meanwhile the country, under the strong regency of Ras Taffari, has enjoyed another period of comparative tranquillity.

ABYSSINIA : FACTS AND FIGURES

The Country

North-east African country lying between Somaliland British East Africa, and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, consisting of nine provinces of Harrar, Wollo, Kassa and Magi, Gore, Tigré, Damot and Gojam, Equatorial Provinces, Gondar, and Jimma. These provinces include the kingdoms of Tigré, Amhara, and Shoa.

Area about 350,000 square miles. Population estimated about 8,000,000, of whom Shoans are ruling race and number about 1,500,000.

Government

An absolute monarchy under an emperor called Negus Negusti, or King of Kings, whose rule is only recognised by the lesser kings and chiefs so long as his position is maintained by armed force. Politically Abyssinian institutions are of a medieval character, there being only a nebulous State Council comprising the more important Rases under whom are district governors and village chiefs.

Army

All the Shoans are soldiers and disdain any other occupation. Standing army is a nucleus and consists in the main of paid garrisons of the provinces amounting to about 100,000, increased in war to about 300,000 by calling out the chiefs and their retainers.

Commerce and Industries

Chief industries are agricultural, but very undeveloped. Cotton and coffee grow wild, and

would do well if properly cultivated; also sugar-canes, date palms, and vines. Hides and skins, wheat, millet, barley, and tobacco are also produced, but exports are insignificant.

Arms and ammunition, provisions, liquors, certain textiles, sugar, and petroleum are imported. Trade (1920): exports to Great Britain about £9,000; imports, about £82,000.

Communications

One railway from Jibuti (Gulf of Aden) to Addis Abbaba and a few miles of road round Addis Abbaba; mere tracks throughout rest of the empire. Telegraph and telephone lines connect the capital with Jibuti and Harrar and other towns.

Chief Towns

Only town in European sense of the word is Harrar (about 50,000). Addis Abbaba, capital of Abyssinia and of kingdom of Shoa, covering eight to nine square miles, consists merely of villages gathered round the imperial palace (40,000-50,000). Axum, ecclesiastical capital, (5,000); Adoa, capital of Tigré (5,000); Gondar, capital of Amhara (3,000); Ankober (2,000).

Money

Currency is still old Maria Theresa dollar, worth about two shillings. New Menelek dollar, called talari, of same value has been put into circulation, but is not accepted in many places. Two sizes of bars of salt, and cartridges, are also used everywhere as money.



THOUGH BORN AND BRED AS FIGHTERS, THE AFGHANS MAKE BUT POORLY DISCIPLINED SOLDIERS. A company of Afghan infantry of the Ameer's regular forces on parade after its return to Kabul from a punitive expedition against rebels in another province. The men stand on parade with a slackness that would horrify a European soldier, and their equipment is equally casual: some with boots and some without them, and no attempt at uniform, while every rifle is of obsolete pattern. Daring and brilliant in attack, the Afghan soldier is quickly discouraged in defeat

Photo, P. O. Crawford